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Bedfordshire Churches in the Nineteenth Century - extract from
edition of contemporary sources, to be published by Bedfordshire
Historical Record Society (after 1996)
Edited by Chris Pickford (County Archivist)

SHILLINGTON

1. Extract from glebe terrier, 28 June 1822

SHITLINGTON

Church yard. Item the Church-yard containing Two Acres Two Perches adjoining the Vicarage Garden and the Grounds of Trinity College Cambridge on the South, to the Grounds of the said Trinity College on the West, to the Grounds of the said Trinity College on the North, and to the White Horse public house belonging to John Pryor Esquire on the East. The fences on the West, North and part of the South side are Kept up by the Parish.

Church. Belonging to the said Parish are first the Parish Church, an ancient building containing in length with the chancel Ninety feet, in breadth Fifty two feet. The Chancel in breadth Twenty feet. The two Aisles on each side of the Chancel in breadth Sixteen feet each. The Steeple in breadth Fourteen feet and a half by Seventeen and a half within the walls, in height Sixty feet.

Furniture and ornaments. Within and belonging to the Church are One Communion table with a covering for the same of Green cloth. One Linen cloth for the same and Two Napkins. One Silver Chalice and Paten. One Bason for the Offertory. One Chest with three locks (in the Keeping of the Churchwardens). One Pulpit and Reading desk. One Pulpit Cushion covered with Green cloth. One large Bible of the last Translation. One large Common Prayer Book. The Book of Homilies. The King's Arms with the Ten Commandments. Five Bells with their Frames. The First of least Bell being Two feet Ten inches and a half in Diameter with this Inscription (Praise the Lord 1602). The second Bell Two feet Eleven inches and a half in Diameter with the same Inscription (Praise the Lord 1638). The third Bell Three feet Two inches and a half in Diameter with this Inscription (Be yt Knowne to all that doth me see, that Newcombe of Leicester made mee 1603). The fourth Bell Three feet Seven inches in Diameter with this Inscription (Non clamor sed amor cantat in aure Dei 1624). The fifth or largest Bell Four feet in Diameter with this Inscription (Cum cano busta mori cum pulpita vivere disce, Disce mori nostro viveri disce sono 1624). Also one other little Bell. One Bier. One Hearse cloth. Two Surplices.

Parish Registers. Three Parchment Register Books, the first beginning in 1543 and ending in 1653, containing Baptisms, Marriages and Burials, The second beginning in 1653 and ending in 1812, containing Baptisms and Burials up to 1812, and Marriages up to 1754. The third containing Marriages only, beginning 1754 and ending 1812. Also Three other Parchment Register Books one containing Baptisms, one Marriages, and one Burials each beginning in 1813 and continued up to the present time.

Parish Clerk. There is also due to the Parish Clerk for every Funeral Five shillings, for every Wedding by publication of Banns Two shillings and Sixpence, by Licence Five shillings, for every Christening one shilling, and for every Churching of Women Sixpence.

2. Archdeacon Bonney's historical notices of churches, c.1820-1840

SHITLINGTON OR SHEDLINGTON, All Saints. This beautiful Church consists of a Nave, Aisles, Chancel and side Chapels reaching the whole length of the Chancel. A Tower of brick supplies the place of the original Tower, which fell at the beginning of the last Century. Beneath the Chancel is a Crypt, the Entrance to which is from the East End of the North Chapel. The String Course below the parapet of the East End of the Chancel is ornamented with a Rose (or Flower) with a P in the centre of it. The next has an A, the next an Ox (or Bull) and the last a Tun [Sketch of a tun]. There is a rich decorated Rood Screen, and there are similar Screens on the Sides of the Chancel & at the West Entrance of the Chapel. the general Character of the Piers, Arches and Windows is the decorated. The East End of the Chancel is flanked by two Square stair case Turrets. The position of this church is remarkable. Inscriptions on the Communion Plate are, on the chalice, "Shitlington Church Plate 1702", the same on the Cover - on the Patin, "Shitlington Parish Plate Dec 1777." Instead of a Flagon there is a plated Cup with Two Handles & a Cover.

3. Archdeacon Bonney's visitation notebook, 1823-1839

SHITLINGTON. This Church consists of a Nave, North and South Aisles, a Tower at the West end of the Nave, and Chancel at the East End thereof - on the sides of the Chancel are Chapels, being continuations of the North & South Aisles.

At the Visitation of 1823 It was ordered that the Eastern part of the Roof of the Nave be repaired, but the old work neither altered not painted; the Door on the South side of the South Chapel be new faced; according to the Original Pattern; and the other Doors of the Church be repaired and oak grained; The open Seats be repaired, cleansed and oiled; the Bible & Prayer Book be repaired; The Old Flagon and Bason be changed for new ones; The Stonework of the Doors and Windows be restored with Parker's Cement; The Font be cleansed from Wash; and repaired with Parker's Cement.

At the Visitation of 1826 the following Order was given That a Cover to the font of a proper Form be made; & the Font be moved to the End of the South Aisle; the top of a pew to be removed, which has been erected without leave; The Cornices be renewed with proper Cement, and the Walls pointed; the wood work in a North window to be replaced with Stone as originally the Case.

There is a Charity here out of which 16^s. per ann is paid to the repair of the Church -

The glebe House is a Cottage.

At the Visitation of 1833. It was ordered that the Communion cup be put into shape - & a new Pall be purchased - The Arch now blocked up by the King's Arms be restored -

At the Visitation of 1836. Ordered that the North Door and also the Staircase Door leading up to the Roof be repaired. The Leat at the bottom of the Nave be repaired and cleansed. a new Pall be purchased - the Old Surplice be mended, proper drainage made under the Spouts - The Turrits at the East End to be repaired and the Door thereunto belonging - The gudgeon of one of the wheels of a Bell to be repaired - The Communion Cup to be put into Shape.

At the Visitation 1839 Ordered the Church Wardens to have the Timbers of the Western Bay of the Roof of the Nave examined and substantially repaired - and such of the Leads as are decayed to have re-cast. The Communion Table Cloth to be repaired - The floors of the Open Seats, of Mr. Musgrave's Servants Pew and a Pew at the West End of the Nave to be repaired - The Turrets at the East End belonging to the Chancel to be repaired - NB. Mr. Richard Paine, Churchwarden June 29th 1839 wrote to me that the Bursar of Trin. Coll. Camb. Impropriators had given an order to the Occupier of the Rectory Farm to have this done without delay.

4. Article on the Church by W.A. (no.56), NM 24 April 1847

SETHLINGDUNE (SHITLINGTON), All Saints. This is another of the fine churches of Bedfordshire; built on a commanding situation, rendering it a conspicuous and interesting object from various points.

The chancel has a ceiled roof; an eastern window with very ordinary glazing. the children are most unjustifiably placed on forms, in this part, during Divine service. Square pews are also here - very ugly - containing tables, forming a convenient resting-place, we suppose, for the boas, parasols, or reticules of the occupants. Nothing can be more out of harmony than such wretched fittings-up. When will the Clergy set their flocks the example of polishing these miserable innovations, denounced by so many of the highest dignitaries of our Church. 'The time will come, ere long,' says Archdeacon Hare, 'when the example set (in Sussex) by such true members of our aristocracy will be catching; when the pens and sties by which our churches have been so long disfigured will be swept away; when people will become ashamed of sitting imprisoned in their lonely cells, and will feel that the noblest and most blessed position for the high as well as the low is that of a member of the congregation of the Lord.' Here also we again observed a musical instrument, indicating that the irreverent practice noticed at Higham Gobion obtains here. A portion of the south aisle is boarded off as a vestry, to the great disfigurement of the church, increased by the ugly chimney-shaft poked through the roof, rendered most offensively conspicuous. When the chancel was disfigured by a plaster ceiling, it became necessary to deprive the clerestory windows of their fair proportion, thus adding another instance of the injury this lath-and-plaster substitute for the timber roof creates. The rood-screen is in good order, most probably oak, but it has not escaped the painter's daubing.

The nave has a timber roof; a portion of it is coloured. It is to be regretted that this well-intentioned proceeding had not been directed by a better knowledge, Open seats prevail for the most part, the selfish boxes are confined to the aisles. Pulpit and reading-desk modern work, wrongly placed; the former is surmounted by one of the ugliest of sounding boards. The columns are whitewashed; our guide seemed very anxious for another dose of this damp-engendering composition. The western window is open to view. The poor tower that replaced the ancient one has a portion boarded off, for fear the ringers should be under the eye of the Churchwarden, we suppose, and by any disorderly conduct disturb his quiet repose, that might call him from his comfortable pew. But it is the rule, with few exceptions, to exclude the ringers from observation, and it has been, more than once, our fate to hear the rattling of the heavy

shoes of these men on the stairs, flying from the church the moment the minister enters the desk. It has been well observed by the same excellent and indefatigable labourer in the cause of church reform and restoration - 'Quiet and decorum amongst the ringers would be produced by the removal of all platforms and ceilings which would thus be rung by them upon the floor of the church, where their behaviour would be exposed to general observation. A convenient disposition of the bell-ropes might easily be managed without detriment to the appearance of the church.'* The roof, although not of its original height, is still lofty. A square box appropriated to the singers, in the south aisle, is in a most dirty condition. The pavement is in a deplorable state. Two enclosed pews are partly made up of portions of the panneling of the screen; 'they break down all the carved work thereof.' In a corner, is the usual refuge for brooms other defilement, which it is so lamentable to witness in so many instances. The font has no lead or drain, but contains the usual pottery crockery. In the north aisle, a flaming new square box has been erected; its rawness rendering it more than usually offensive. The churchyard is a grazing-ground for sheep; an apology seemed to be offered for their being out on the day of our visit. The lead remains on the roof. There is no weekly service, and no school but one established by Dissenters. Now as the wealthy College of Trinity appears to take the lion's share of these revenues, leaving a small stipend for their Vicar, it is hardly to be expected that he should build a school for the children of his own congregation. But it will be vain for these bodies to utter a syllable about lay impropiators, while they set such a flagrant example of dereliction of duty. Far better would their money be spent in assisting to raise a county in which they hold such valuable preferments from the discreditable position it holds in the statistics of education and pauperism and rendering it a byword and reproach,+ than in lavishing it on the vain and fleeting vanities of inaugurations.

'Their little triumphs, o'er,
Their human passions now no more,
Save Charity, that glows beyond the tomb.'

19 April 1847

W.A.

* On the Reverence Due to Holy Places

+ 'The English is, therefore, better educated ...

W.A = nom de plume of John Martin,
librarian to D of Bedford at W.Burn.

Shillington

Detailed notes in file

First incumbent (Fasti): Stephen de Eketon, 1220

Pevsner pp.143-4; VCH II pp.297-9

Lanham, Paul The Ringing Grooves of Change n.d. [1983]

Barrel organ: Barrel organ purchased by churchwardens but now no trace nor local recollection (Boston, N and Langwill, L.G. Church and Chamber Barrel-Organs (Edinburgh 1967) p.73 citing Bedfordshire Magazine Vol.3 no.19 (Winter 1951/2) p.102)

Bequest in will to "the little window next the chancel door to make it larger for lack of light in the chancel" 20d, and for "repair of the window behind St.Giles altar", 1531 (ABP/R 3 f.44d)

Shillington - "Certayne pales belonginge to Holwelberye of our Churche yarde are owte of reparation which were lately in the handes of Thomas Snagg & now beinge in the handes of Mr. John Sancte Jones" 1578 (Archidiaconal visitations for 1578 [ABC 3] in BHRS Vol.69 (1990) pp.175-183)

Churchwardens accounts (P 44/5/2) include: window repairs, digging stone for the belfry etc, 1605-6; cloth for communion table and "two flagons for to serve at the Communion", plastering etc, 1607; purchase of "the poore mans boxe with the lockes" (5s.8d.) and pulpit cover 1611; tiles in aisles, 1616; repairs to seat in chancel 1618; lead for roof (£36) 1620; vestry window repairs (£1.2.7) 1621; recasting bells 1624; table for the vestry 1625; painting the church, timber for the church, purchase of a chest (£7.17s) 1626; repairs to steeple stairs 1628; 200 paving tiles 1630; new bellframe 1632; repairs to lead roofs 1633-4; glazing chapel windows and mason's work at church, "making the Communion rayling" 1635; pulpit cloth and cushion and carpet for the communion table (£10) 1636; repairs to lead roof, iron bars for windows 1638; bell recast by Robert Oldfield at Hertford, purchase of bible and service book 1638; taking down the communion rails 1640; "pulling downe the crosses and other work about the Church & Church lofte" (6s.), sale of old organ pipes 1648-9; purchase of hour glass and mending the "standord for the hower glasse" 1654; setting up the Kings armes in the church 1660; steeple repairs and new weathercock, 1663.

[Gap in churchwardens accounts between 1666 and 1775]

Inventory of church goods, 1640 (P 44/6/1)

Cup and paten of 1702 (ABE 5)

Papers re brief in Quarter Sessions records, 9 October 1745 (QSM 7 p.164 and QSM 8 pp.82-4); original brief, 14 June 1746 (Bucks.RO PR 198/7/1)

British Library, Add.Ms.5836 f.111 (Church notes, c.1753): "This is a large handsome church, the N & S Isles of the same Length

with the Nave & Chancel, which makes it on the outside a very well proportioned Pile of Building; but the steeple is fallen down, & the Bells, which are 5 in Number, lie in the N.Isle. ..."

Tablet on south side of tower records fall of tower in 1701 and rebuilding in 1750, and stone over west lintel of clock chamber bears "Matt^w Lacy / 1750" (CJP notes)

Churchwardens accounts 1775-1829 (P 44/5/3): [nothing of leadwork in 1774]; new surplice (£4 8s) 1800-1801; minor work (carpenter £26 and glazier £7) 1806-7; new prayer book (£1 8s) 1807-8; iron register chest (£5 5s) and new registers of baptisms and burials 1813-14; carpenter's bill (£32) 1816-17; new terrier 1822; Notes on letters about Mr.Musgrave's pew 1824; various repairs to Shillington church windows and door in 1825-6 by Mr. Pollard (£73), Mr. Betts (£20 and £33) and Mr.Francis (£21); purchase of flagon and cover from Mr.Miller (£3 16s), repairs to Bible and Prayer book by Mr.Paternoster (£2 7s), and moving the font by Mr.Warren (£2 14s) in 1826-7; payment to Mr.Betts, Glazier (£25 14s) in 1826-7.

Perspective view of church from north as inset on estate map of 1777 (L 33/13/1)

Churchwardens' accounts 1829-1936 (P 44/5/4); Work by John Stevens, plasterer, of Clophill, 1829-30. Plaster work in the church, £30 in 1830, and repairs to the coping of the church etc; new velvet pall (£2) 1837; roof repairs by Lot Richardson (£30) in 1840; mention of organ from 1861; subscription list for Frere memorial window 1877; pulpit and lectern by Rattee & Kett (£84.13.5) in 1898

Faculty for Musgrave pew, 1826, with (loose) letter and plan (ABF 2 p.146)

SHILLINGTON - Church remarkable for its screens & its very curious painted roofs. The appearance of the church is much injured by some deal pews in the S aisle. The East window is Perpendicular but modern. A brick tower built about 1750. The old Tower fell down about 1700. The No. of screens & the length of the Chancel together with the able manner in which the late Mr. Whitbread [Samuel Whitbread II, died 1815] repaired & beautified the Church give it a peculiar interest (G.Boissier, 1827 - BL Add.Ms. 48977 f.431-d)

Churchwardens bills 1827-1830 (P 44/5/5) include: Repairs by Lot Richardson (£1.0.8) 1828 and (£7.15) 1829 (no.12 and 16); repairs to lead on roof by W.Betts (£8.19.3) 1829 (no.14); John Stevens, plasterer, for plastering inside of church (£38.13.6) 1829 (no.17); recasting small bell 1828-9 (no.18); Bill for two windsor chairs for Shillington vestry room (12s), 1829 (no.19)

Vestry minutes 1829-1912 (P 44/8/1): lead for church to be weighed 1829; estimate of John Stevens of Clophill for repairs "to the coping of the church together with the cornices and buttments connected with the same" for £58, in 1830; estimate to be obtained for repairing the north door and for a new door in the north aisle leading up to the leads 1832; new clock from

Thomas Bingham of Birmingham (£60) 1839; Lot Richardson's tender for roof repairs accepted 26 June 1840; further church repairs by Lot Richardson and Thomas Francis 9 May 1846; whitewashing the church and painting the columns (Lot Richardson - £5.10s) 5 June 1847; erection of organ, belfry arch closed by a curtain 1857; enclosed pew for organ 1858; Mr. W. Watson of Henlow to estimate for church roof repairs 1862; Mr. Armour of Shefford to report on repairs to lead 1875; Boarding separating belfry from church to be removed 1875; church restoration 1881-3; bells rehung by Warner 1883; memorial to Rev. J. A. Bonser.

Dilapidation on chancel, certified by Thomas Smith, Hertford, 1835 (L 27/21)

Tender of Lot Richardson accepted for repairing "one bay of each side of the Upper Roof of the church, exchange of lead and laying new lead at 7lb to the foot, gutters made new and new flashings" £30 - to be completed within two months. (Vestry minute 26 June 1840 - P 44/8)

Recasting roof of steeple, new weathercock, new oak spire 18 feet long and 1 foot square at the bottom, releading two bays of upper roof of church by Lot Richardson (£48.10s), and Thomas Francis to undertake carpenter's work on 2 bays of upper roof (£20.16s), Vestry minutes 9 May 1846 (P 44/8)

Stained glass in the east window created in the year 1850 in memory of John and Fanny Ferrien Lines of Chibley Farm. Created in a typical Victorian design, it depicts the main episodes of the life of Christ, surmounted by angels and the lamb bearing a flag at the top. Lanham p.45

Erection of organ in church, and alterations to pews by the organ (Lot Richardson - £12), 14 Dec. 1857 and 2 Jan. 1858 (Vestry minutes P 44/8/1)

Shillington - Beds. Times 15 May 1858 p.3c.6 - new keyboard organ (including barrel mechanism) by Joseph Walker brought into use on 9th May.

Pulpit built by Rev. John Frere, 5 Oct. 1861 - replaced in 1898 (cutting pasted in ABV 3)

W. Watson of Henlow to estimate the amount of repair needed to the church roof, 10 Oct. 1862 (P 44/8/1)

Archdeacon Bathurst's notebook (ABV 3); 1874 substantial repair but sadly needs complete restoration; 1882 the church is being restored; 1888 restoration gradually being carried out; 1910 external repairs to tower and battlements about to be done

Boarding separating belfry from church to be removed, belfry repaired, and new ladder etc. Vestry minute 8 July 1875 (P 44/8)

Memorial window in church to Rev. J. A. Frere, 1877 (P 44/5/4)

SHILLINGTON - Restoration and alteration. Vincent Wing of 6 Whitehall, London, architect. Cost £2200. 18 October 1881 (Ely

Diocesan Faculty register D 3/4a pp.150-3)

Ely faculty 1881/5; Herts.R.O. DSA 2/1/199

Draft faculty, 18 October 1881 - to take cement off the external walls etc. and restore all decayed and defective parts and restore the internal walls; to take off the colours from the internal masonry and restore them; to restore the porch; to reglaze the windows; to take up the floor and relay with tiles; to remove seats on the south side of the south aisle, at the west end of the nave and in the north chapel, and provide new pitch pine benches; to remove the present screen to the organ and make good the floor; to provide and fix a screen in the tower arch; to erect a fire-place in the vestry. To the plans and specifications of Vincent Wing of London, architect. Cost £2200.

Specification, September 1881

Appeal leaflet and subscription list c.1881 - Trinity College are restoring the clerestory windows and removing the plaster ceiling

Plans as existing and as proposed

Report of Mr. Wing, architect, read and discussed. Steps to be taken to raise £500 for warming and partial repair of the church. Vestry minute 20 July 1881; work costing £744 described in vestry minutes [copied - nave refloored with red tiles,, Porritt's heating apparatus, old pews removed and replaced by open benches, extensive repairs to porch, four large window in south aisles and three south clerestory windows entirely renewed, fireplace and chimney removed from south aisle and ancient square headed window restored in lieu thereof, "window of south chancel aisle looking east" repaired, internal stonework on south side of church cleaned and repaired, walls replastered and paint scraped off pillars] and architect ordered to prepare specification for completing the work [repair of north side and four new windows], 21 Sept 1882; further work to be postponed 29 March 1883; committee appointed to oversee work to be commenced as soon as possible 13 June 1883(P 44/8);

Report of restoration in Beds. Mercury 19 Aug.1882 : The parish has restored the south porch, which was in a very dilapidated condition. The windows of the south aisles and clerestory have also been restored and re-glazed; internal masonry on the south side of the nave and aisles cleansed and the walls re-stuccoed. The whole of the nave and aisles have been refloored with tiles from St.George's Works, Worcester. The high pews in the south aisle and west end of nave removed, and open benches of pitch pine with carved ends substituted, the rest of the seats in the body of the church being ancient ones. Trinity College Cambridge have restored the clerestory windows in the chancel to their original form and have put on a new oak roof (the old one having been in a very rotten state)

Pulpit and lectern, and repairs to screen, as a memorial to Rev.J.A.Bonser. Made by Rattee & Kett, Cambridge, in Dec.1898 at a cost of £84 13s. 5d (P 44/5/4; also cutting in ABV 3)

Pulpit and stained glass in east window of south chapel erected in memory of Rev.J.A.Bonser (d.1898). The window was designed by the Rector of Upper Stondon, the Rev. Charles Kerry. It is in

three sections, the central panel depicting the Virgin with the infant Christ standing with her. On either side of her are the two main figures of the church's past. To the left Etheric, the founder of the Norman Church, and to the right Matthew de Assheton. [Comments on window and copy of inscription]. Lanham pp.44-5

Oak sanctuary candlesticks given in 1908 by Charles Baker of Pirton Hall, and once used in Winchester Cathedral (Lanham pp.45-6)

Tower restored in 1911 to mark the coronation of King George V (Lanham p.46)

Organ moved from south chapel to north chapel in 1921, enabling the south chapel to be opened up and made available for worship (Lanham p.45)

Outdoor pulpit with a door into the vestry at the north-east corner of the church, created by the Rev. Langdale Postgate in 1921. Known at Postgate's folly. (Lanham p.46)

Stained glass window in memory of Postgate (d.1934). It depicts St.George, St.Alban, and St.Joan